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Some of the Best Illinois High School Poetry of 1948

Selected by CHARLES W. ROBERTS

University of Illinois

FOREWORD

THE compiler of this collection of student writing must admit that he has not been able to examine all of the best poetry produced in all Illinois high schools in the last year. He trusts that the selection he has made from the material submitted is representative of what is being done by the better students in schools throughout the state. It is his earnest hope that teachers and students will accept the challenge which this issue offers and will resolve now to be represented in next year's anthology. All contributions should be addressed to *Illinois English Bulletin*, 204a Lincoln Hall, Urbana, Illinois. Each manuscript should bear the name of the author, his graduating class numeral, the name of his high school, and the name of his English teacher. No manuscripts will be returned unless they are accompanied by return postage.

Additional copies of this issue are available at twenty cents a copy in orders of ten or more mailed to one address. Teachers and students of composition will find detailed discussion of the contents interesting and profitable.

C. W. R.

DEPARTURE

Your fingers wind themselves around
My thoughts. We shall not meet again,
Perhaps for longer than you think. The sound
Of silence beats against my mind, and laps
My heart, as waves lap sand.
Nor is my sadness only for the moment
When I quickly say goodbye and stand
Wordless, already lonely ; it is not then
We really part. But wait until we
Meet once more ; wait 'till your hand in mine
No longer feels at home, and see
How we are not the same. These
Stars may shine
When next we meet, but the same brightness
They will have no more.
Could we only stand like this,
The two of us forever,
Nor you return to shake a stranger's hand.

— AUDREY TICE '50
West High School, Rockford
Pearl Geddes, teacher

DOORWAY

A board, a nail, a beveled ledge,
A form, a stud, a polished edge,
A yard, a lot, a garden fence
Of frame or brick, in Bath or Rome—
All these will make a residence
But only love can make a home,

— DOUGLAS CHALMERS '49
University High School, Urbana
Dorothy Potter Swindell, teacher

ADMONITION TO MAN

Insignificant clay! Speck of dust!
Product of moral corrosion and rust!
You strut and boast how powerful you are;
Compare yourself to the brightest star.
So little you actually know;
So little power you have to show;
So little of any importance you say or do;
Why, no one need ever fear you!

Your selfishness never ceases to grow;
You are the only person you know.
You proclaim yourself master of all;
Praise every gain, deny every fall.
And yet, in everything you've done
You've lost the very things you've won.

You say you plan peace;
But wars never cease . . .
Your destruction is what you really plan!
No wonder man despises man!

— EDWIN CLESSON '48
Decatur High School
Wilmer A. Lamar, teacher

LOST TREASURE

Men still
Will search for wealth
When every year there fall
From tired trees realms of yellow leaves,
Pure gold.

— PAULA GIBBS '51
Maine Twp. H. S., Park Ridge
Pauline M. Yates, teacher

"O, EVERYONE CONSIDERS . . ."

O, everyone considers,—no one knows . . .
I sometimes think that never blows so red
The poppy as where some buried hero bled;
In every bloom within my garden grows
The ancient dust of some sweet Emeline;
The purple violet from some shy miss,
Pink hyacinth from some forgotten kiss,
From manly strength the sturdy oak and pine.

O, everyone considers,—no one knows
Where spirits roam when bones are blowing dust,
Good souls, or souls unhappy, having sinned.
I never want to be a blood-red rose,
Nor violet, nor oak; but if I must
Return, I'll live in rain or wave or wind.

— JOYCE V. OLSON '49
Calumet High School, Chicago
Elsie F. Filippi, teacher

THE ARTIST

The artist sees the beauty in drifting, dancing sand;
The naked eye sees nothing, but a hot and endless land.
The artist sees the promise of a ploughed field filled with seed;
The naked eye sees it worthless of bearing aught but weed.
The artist calls an ocean a mystic water toss;
The man with no imagination calls it "a beastly thing to cross."
The artist hears a word and builds a song of praise;
The common man may hear it and not think of it for days.
An artist can be any man who keeps his dreams alive,
The naked eye belongs to one whose dreams will never thrive.

— JEAN LOVE '49
University High School, Normal
Ruth Stroud, teacher

PARTING AT GRADUATION

Farewell! That word has broken hearts
And blinded eyes with tears;
Farewell! One stays, and one departs,
Between them roll the years.

Good-bye! That word makes faces pale
And fills the soul with fears;
Good-bye! Two words that wing a wail
Which flutters down the years.

Adieu! Such is the word for us,
'Tis more than word—it's prayer.
They do not part, who do part thus,
For God is everywhere!

— WILLIAM DURKIN, '48
Waukegan Twp. H. S.
Eve E. Oke, teacher

NIGHT PATTERN

People on a train,
An old refrain.
Faces in the night
Made of dark and light,
Far behind a pane,
Blurred by the rain,
Racing streak of light,
Pattern of the night
Listen to the whooo,
They'll forget you.
They'll forget you.
You're gone too,
In the blurring of the light,
In the pattern of the night.

— TERRY TRUITT '49
University High School, Urbana
Dorothy Potter Swindell, teacher

NACHTMOTIF

The willow tree is still.
 A calm hush hangs over all the houses.
 Gentle, heavy, and cruel, and clouds bend over the manswarm.
 And sleep, sweet sleep, will soon come.
 And with the sleep, peace.

For sleep bears up sorrow's sweetness.
 And tender dreams come of soft sleep.
 In sleep there is warmth and love,
 And sweet communion with universal wisdom.

In sleep's drunken conjecture there is no evil.
 Nor is there any morality
 For to sleeping men all things are good.
 And in sleep is no hatred, nor larceny, nor adultery,
 Nor anything that is not wholly good.

In sleep's sweet dreams all voices are gentle,
 All words warm,
 All lips soft and full with heavy, heated blood,
 All arms enfolding,
 And all looks filled with coursing love.

At night, sleep, sweet sleep, blankets the day's raw wound.
 By day, men rage.

— JERRY RUSSELL '48
 Decatur High School
 Helen Stapp, teacher

MEMORIES

The friendship ring was put away,
 The silver, dark and stained.
 For eager hands had come unclasped
 Friendship was unregained.

— GINGER ERICKSON '49
 University High School, Urbana
 Dorothy Potter Swindell, teacher

COMPENSATION

Oh, pity not the dead ;
There is a certain majesty in death,
A dignity—a peacefulness sublime,
When God has laid His kindly hand on man
And taken him away to greater bliss
Than earth can know. No more will dreams be spent
On useless goals and trampled to the dust.
No more will pain be felt, nor want, nor fear
Of life and death and greater things than man—
That man has feared since time began. No more
The haunting dread of all unknown ; the sounds
Of war and poverty. Instead, death brings
A silent peace and soft oblivion.

But, envy not the dead,
For, too, there is a hopelessness in death ;
The dead have lost the ecstasy of life.
For they can never hear a symphony,
And thrill to notes of throbbing violin.
And they can never stand on windswept hill
And feel the exultation surging through
Their hearts and souls. And they can never watch
The burning gold and white of sunrise fade
To lovely tints of silver, rose, and pearl.
And they can never hold the simple trust
Of children dear to them and born of love—
And they can never feel that love again.

Yes, pity not—and envy not—the dead ;
For Death, the oldest Solomon, has struck
A cruel bargain : He will take away
All sorrow—yet with it, he takes all joy.

— ROSEMARY SHERMAN
Lyons Twp. H. S., LaGrange
Norma Jordan, teacher

DEATH

Death,
A chill black hand
That touches some too soon,
Is welcomed when it leads us late
To peace.

— MARJORIE BROWN '51
Maine Twp. H. S., Park Ridge
Pauline M. Yates, teacher

ELAINE

High in her tower she sat and wept
And died because misfortune fell
But once upon her.
Selfish maid and spoiled, she wept
Because for once she did not get
Her heart's desire.
And cared she little what became
Of father, brothers, or her house;
But only, she had been denied,
And this misfortune magnified
A thousand times, until it seemed
To overwhelm her.
And so all else she did forget,
And thought she only of Elaine.
Her life, her love, her wounded pride
Turned inward on herself,
She died.

— GARLAND RUSSELL
Lyons Twp. H. S., LaGrange
Kay Keefe, teacher

THE LEDO ROAD

Is the Gateway to India at Bombay,
Really as beautiful as they say?

Don't rightly know, M'am. Did my part
Breakin' point in the jungle's heart;
Blasted the boulders, felled the trees
With red muck comin' aroun' our knees, ,
Carved the guts from the Patkai's side,
Dozed our trace, made it clean and wide,
Metalled and graded, dug and filled:
We had the Ledo Road to build.

Well, surely you saw burning ghat,
Fakirs, rope-tricks and all of that.

Reckon I didn't. But way up ahead
I tended the wounded, buried the dead,
For I was a Medic, and little we knew
But the smell of sickness all day through,
Mosquitoes, leeches, and thick dark mud,
Where the Chinese spilled their blood
After the enemy guns were stilled:
We had the Ledo Road to build.

Of course you found the Taj Mahal
The loveliest building of them all.

Can't really say, lady. I was stuck
Far beyond Shing with a QM truck.
Monsoon was rugged there, hot and wet
Nothing to do but work and sweat.
And dry was the dust upon my mouth
As steadily big "cats" roared on south
Over the ground where Japs lay killed:
We had the Ledo Road to build.

But you've been gone two years this spring
Didn't you see a single thing?

Never saw much but the moon shine on
A Burmese temple around Maingkwan,
And silver transports high in the sky,
Thursday River and the swift Tanai,
And Hukwang Valley coming all green
These are the only sights I've seen.
Did our job, though, like God willed :
We had the Ledo Road to build.

— WILLIAM DURKIN '48
Waukegan Twp. H. S.
Eve E. Oke, teacher

A STEM

Beneath the bloom there is a stem,
A staff of dainty green.
But since it holds a colored gem,
It's very seldom seen.

It sometimes wears a coat so smooth,
A velvet kind of gown,
And sometimes it has prickly thorns,
Or fuzzy mats of down.

Perhaps the blossom is more gay,
And clings not to the sod,
But tell me where the bloom would be
If never "stemmed" by God.

— HELENE HAYES '50
Naperville High School
Dorothy Scroggie, teacher

INVASION

From the ships, scores of steel bees scream toward the beaches
Dealing a sting of death to anything they touch.
A shroud of smoke and debris envelops the island shutting out
the sun,
And the faces of war and death are seen in the midst of confusion
Wearing a satisfied grin.

The bombardment now has stopped,
And the man-laden barges creep toward the shell-torn beaches.
From the bowels of the barges come the frightened whispers of men.
The barge strikes bottom; the doors open, spewing the men
Onto the shores of Hell.

Death stung many on the shore of that unknown isle.
For the living began the advance, tortured and terrible,
And carried forward heroically to that quiet devastation, "Victory."
Yet, in the sight of God, is not the victor still
Man's furious ignorance?

— STUART HYER '48
West High School, Rockford
Lois Dilley, teacher

THE PUSSY WILLOW

Have you ever known
The soft furriness of the pussy willow,
Have you seen its tiny claws
Dig deep into the bark
Of a twig,
Or listened to the muffled song
Of the pussy willow kitten?
Gently—softly,
Purr-r-r Purr-r-r Purr-r-r.

— CORINNE PALMER '50
East Rockford High School
Adele Johnson, teacher

EYE MESSAGES

Jewels bright within her face,
Dancing lights that move with grace.

Glancing coyly here and there,
Never were there eyes so fair.

Flirting glances they bestow;
Happiness from them does flow.

Tender pity goes to all
Till at night the lids do fall.

Happy are the ones to whom
Glances flow across the room.

Glancing coyly here and there
Never were there eyes so fair.

— MIRIAM BAADE '48
Decatur High School
Wilmer A. Lamar, teacher

I HAD NO PENCIL

The thought came to me with sudden force,
But I had no pencil.

I yearned to set it down in that
Swift moment when it was tangible,
But it darted into the latent nether regions of jargon
When I saw that I had not even a stub,
A core, a molecule of graphite.

I remember it now
As being infinitely significant, far-reaching.
Indeed,

It almost solved the enigma of life for me,
And might have brought my disconcerted ego
Back into reality from the world of dread
And the slough of despond.

But it is too late now—
I had no pencil.

— DEAN PEERMAN '49
Benton Twp. H. S., Benton
Ellen Burkhart, teacher

LIMERICK

There was a fine fellow, named Bruce,
 As tall and as straight as a spruce;
 He took acrobatics
 And now has rheumatics,—
 He is dented and crooked and loose.

— JEAN LINDELL '49
 Calumet H. S., Chicago
 Elsie F. Filippi, teacher

HOW ABOUT YOURS?

A woman's purse is a great device,
 Viewed from the outside it looks very nice.
 It must be good sized, but not to hold cash,
 For it's usually filled with a world of trash.

I found one last week near an old filling station
 And searched inside for identification
 You'd never believe what all it contained
 When I emptied it out so that nothing remained.

A dollar, a dime, a quarter, a nickel,
 Four pictures of boys (she must have been fickle),
 A package of matches, two sticks of gum,
 A bottle of perfume, a small jar of "Mum."

A comb and four hairpins, all badly bent,
 A soiled, rumpled hankey with a faint perfume scent.
 A mirror, an earring, five stubs from a show,
 A note from a boy-friend simply signed "Joe."

A newspaper clipping, a letter to mail,
 A door-key, two stamps, and an old rusty nail.
 A pen and a pencil, a manicure file,
 A compact and lipstick completed the pile.
 But I learned a good lesson, nevertheless,
 My clean purse contains my name and address.

— MARTHA MURPHY '49
 Decatur High School
 Louise Fike, teacher

FRUSTRATION

'Twas a nice October morning
Last September in July.
The moon lay thick upon the ground ;
The mud shone in the sky.

The flowers were singing sweetly,
And the birds were in full bloom
When I went down in the cellar
To sweep an upstairs room.

— INEZ STYLES '50
East Rockford High School
Adele Johnson, teacher

LIMERICK

Der was a young man from Detroit
Who married a goil from Beloit ;
Dey were very happy
Till he fought wit her pappy,
And now he's six feet in de doit.

— DICK STROBERG '49
DeKalb Twp. High School
Louise Nelson, teacher

MORE LIMERICKS

There was a young man, named O'Daids,
Who was a jack-of-all-trades,—
He fixed many things :
The ice-box now rings
And the toaster shoots out razor blades !

— LEE SIPPLE '50
Calumet H. S., Chicago
Elsie F. Filippi, teacher

"I like to abbreviate oz.,"
Said an odd-minded writer, named Coz.,
 "Also, bu. and lb.,
 But quite soon I fd.
When I read, the page seemed to boz."

— RUTH HERING '50
Calumet H. S., Chicago
Elsie F. Filippi, teacher

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